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ABSTRACT

This document contains four papers from a symposium on performance improvement processes. In "Never the Twain Shall Meet?: A Glimpse into High Performance Work Practices and Downsizing" (Laurie J. Bassi, Mark E. Van Buren) evidence from a national cross-industry of more than 200 establishments is used to demonstrate that high-performance work systems are associated with less downsizing and with improved performance (even during downsizing activity). "Performance Diagnosis Matrix: A Discussion of Human Resources Development Scholarship" (Wendy E.A. Ruona, Elaine Lyford-Nojima) examines 15 questions that address performance variables (mission/goal, systems design, capacity, motivation, and expertise) at three performance levels (organizational, process, and individual). "An Exploratory Study of Significant Relationships and the Work Performance Styles of Peak Performers, Workaholics, and Average Performers" (Gloria Wright) details the findings of in-depth interviews with 30 subjects identified by their peers or supervisors as exhibiting characteristics of a peak performer, average performer, or workaholic. The importance of examining and coordinating formal training and development messages with the content and dissemination of other organizational messages such as employee communication, marketing, policies and procedures, and promotional communication to avoid information overload, communication gaps, and contradictory information is emphasized in "Integrating Communication in Organizations" (Diane M. Gayeski). (MN)

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**Chair: Reid A. Bates, Louisiana State University**

Never the Twain Shall Meet?: A Glimpse into High Performance Work Practices and Downsizing
*Laurie J. Bassi, American Society for Training and Development*
*Mark E. Van Buren, American Society for Training and Development*

Performance Diagnosis Matrix: A Discussion of Human Resources Development Scholarship
*Wendy E. A. Ruona, University of Minnesota*
*Elaine Lyford-Nojima, University of Minnesota*

An Exploratory Study of Significant Relationships and the Work Performance Styles of Peak Performers, Workaholics and Average Performers
*Gloria Wright, Gloria Wright & Associates*

Integrating Communication in Organizations
*Diane M. Gayeski, OmniCom Assoc., ISPI/AHRD Research Grant Award*

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# Never the Twain Shall Meet?: A Glimpse into High Performance Work Practices and Downsizing

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*Evidence from a national cross-industry survey of over 200 establishments provides a glimpse into the relationship of two practices with notoriously contradictory effects on employee commitment--high performance work systems and downsizing--to organizational performance. We find that high performance work systems are associated with not only less downsizing, but also improved performance even in the presence of downsizing activity. We then examine the consequences of specific downsizing practices for different types of performance.*

Management innovations and business practices come and go, but seemingly contradictory practices often coexist. One example in today's business environment is the uneasy tension between the practices of downsizing and high performance work systems (HPWS). High performance work systems, also called high involvement or commitment work systems, depend upon trust and mutual respect between passionate leaders and motivated and committed employees for their success. Companies with high performance work systems herald that "people are our most important asset." By contrast, downsizing is aimed at trimming this asset down to size. The tendency for downsizing to lower employee morale and motivation has been well documented (Brockner, 1988).

Remarkably, both practices seem to be the product of the same socio-economic forces. Rising competition, new information technologies, and rapid change have led increasing numbers of companies to undertake innovations in how organizations are run, work is organized, and people are managed. As a result, both practices not only coexist within the same economy, but have also been implemented at the same time within the same organizations. De Meuse, Vanderheiden, & Bergmann (1994, p. 525) observed, "Paradoxically, many of those same companies that are trying to foster employee commitment also are the ones conducting massive layoffs, streamlining operations, and relocating plants overseas."

The primary question addressed by this paper is what is the relationship of downsizing and HPWS to organizational performance. In particular, what happens in companies that use both practices? De Meuse et al. (1994) speculate that when companies try to build employee commitment while cutting staff wherever possible, employees might not support either effort unless a new employer-employee relationship is constructed.

Can downsizing undermine the effectiveness of HPWS entirely? While organizations and their employees can often adjust to initial cuts by treating displaced employees humanely and providing training for survivors, anecdotal evidence suggests that repeated downsizing efforts tend to be especially damaging to efforts to maintain high performance work systems and to the organization's overall performance. Or, do high performance work systems lessen the need to downsize? If high performance work systems do enhance organizational performance, organizations with these practices may be less likely to undertake downsizing, or at least, less extensive workforce reductions.

Our final research question involved identifying the downsizing strategies which appear to be most compatible with HPWS. Recent evidence reveals that relatively few organizations have successfully implemented HPWS while simultaneously engaging in downsizing (Gephart & Van Buren, 1996). Previous research on downsizing has shown that the manner in which the process is

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managed can have a significant influence on outcomes at both the individual and organizational levels (Rosow, Casner-Lotto, & Hickey, 1996). Actions such as voluntary early retirement programs and involving employees in the downsizing process tend to produce more positive results. Within downsizing organizations, we examine a number of methods used to carry out job eliminations or workforce reductions and to assist displaced employees and their influence on measures of organizational performance.

**High Performance Work Systems**

Many claim that high performance work systems represent a new vision of what constitutes an effective organization. A notable feature of contemporary high performance companies is their emphasis on the importance of people for organizational performance and competitiveness. Researchers studying such companies have begun to view a firm's human resources as a unique source of competitive advantage that is difficult for its competitors to replicate (Cappelli & Singh, 1992; Pfeffer, 1994).

No single, accepted definition of the components of a high performance work system exists, though there is considerable overlap among researchers. For example, Bailey (1994) focused on characteristics such as expanded training for employees, employee involvement, team-based production, group incentives, improved information processing, and improved technology. MacDuffie & Krafcik (1989) investigated factors such as the use of work teams, job rotation, statistical process control, recruitment and hiring policy, compensation contingent on productivity, and level of ongoing training. Appelbaum & Batt (1994) identified a set of strategies that lead to high performance: work reorganization, human resource strategies, management methods, and industrial relations strategies.

***Multidisciplinary Research.*** Theory and research that contribute to our understanding of HPWS have been carried out in parallel across a number of different fields, particularly human resource management and industrial relations, and often as part of the broader study of organizational transformation and its effect on organizational effectiveness and performance. Research on high performance work systems in the industrial relations literature has revealed the importance of various innovative work practices and process, but tends to be confined to manufacturing industries, especially automobiles (e.g., MacDuffie, 1995; Bailey, 1994; MacDuffie & Krafcik, 1992). Increasingly, industrial relations scholars have been joined by human resource management (HRM) scholars concerned with the effects of particular human resource management practices on individual and organizational performance and their relationships to other organizational components such as the culture, mission, and business strategy.

Research within other fields, such as organizational behavior, industrial/organizational psychology, and sociology has focused on factors that complement those emphasized in the industrial relations and human resource management literature, such as corporate culture, climate, and employee participation (Berg, Appelbaum, Bailey, & Kalleberg, 1994; Mitchell, Lewis, & Lawler, 1990).

***Systems Perspective.*** In the past, research focused on the effects of separate work and human resource practices and processes on individual-level outcomes. A mounting body of evidence, however, suggests that the most fruitful approach to high performance work involves a *systems perspective* (Brown, Reich, & Stern, 1993; Kochan & Useem, 1992). The systems view holds that a combination of coherent, interrelated work practices has greater effects on performance than either the effect of any single practice or the sum of the effects of the individual practices.

For example, Ichniowski, Shaw, & Prennushi (1993) grouped HRM practices into clusters representing four HRM systems. They found evidence that firms that adopted complementary sets of HRM practices had higher productivity than firms that did not. They also found that complementary sets of practices had greater effects on productivity than the sum of the effects due to individual practices. More recently, MacDuffie (1995) identified different bundles of interrelated and internally consistent human resources practices that interact with manufacturing practices and work practices to increase both productivity and quality.

## Downsizing

Downsizing has been an especially popular topic in both business and academic circles over the past couple of years. Although often seen as the latest buzzword for good old workforce reductions and layoffs, it has taken on new importance as companies began to shed employees in record numbers, and for reasons not always associated with economic decline.

The numbers as reported by the business press are impressive. According to the American Management Association (AMA Research, 1995), 50% of all companies surveyed eliminated jobs between July, 1994 and June, 1995. For some companies, downsizing has almost become an annual rite, with nearly 24% reporting that they downsized three or more times between January, 1990 and June, 1995.

The AMA evidence also reveals, however, that the majority of companies that downsize do not realize the economic benefits they expect. More sophisticated analyses support this finding as well. The most thorough, a recent study by Cascio, Young, & Morris (1996) of 5,479 firms, found that downsized companies where no better off than their counterparts over a three-year period in terms of productivity, expenses, profitability, or stock return. Another study by Mitchell & Co. calculated that three years after downsizing, the share prices of downsized companies fell to an average of 26% below the share prices of their competitors. Likewise, De Meuse et al. (1994) report that financial performance among companies that announced layoffs actually worsened over the next two years on all five measures of performance they examined.

***Best Practices.*** In the midst of this frenzy, some scholars have begun to look at methods which companies can use to downsize effectively, if downsize they must (Cascio, 1993; Feldman & Leana, 1994). Spearheading this effort was a stream of research on best practices in downsizing beginning with Cameron, Freeman, & Mishra (1991).

Particularly relevant to this paper is a study of 30 firms in the automotive industry by Cameron (1994). The study examined the relationships between a number of different downsizing practices (e.g. downsizing by attrition) and measures of organizational performance. He found four specific practices associated with improvements in performance and four practices associated with deterioration in performance. Cameron grouped practices into three typical, but not mutually exclusive, downsizing strategies: workforce reduction, work redesign, and systemic change.

Mishra & Mishra (1994) extended this research by employing the three downsizing strategies in a study of 91 business units in the automotive industry. They observed that a pure workforce reduction strategy had a consistently negative impact on organizational performance. By contrast, downsizing which occurred through work redesign or systemic change had a consistently positive relationship with performance.

Their research also perhaps comes closest to looking at the interplay between high performance work systems and downsizing. As noted above, mutual trust is a key feature of successful high performance work systems. Mishra and Mishra found that mutual trust between top management, employees, and customers and suppliers was the optimal condition for organizational performance. They conclude that "it is critical to create a culture of mutual trust before embarking on a downsizing program" (p. 274).

## Data

Unfortunately, no systematic evidence is available on the extent to which organizations have pursued HPWS in the context of downsizing, or the workforce reduction strategies used by successful high performance organizations. Although the issue of compatibility between HPWS and downsizing is complex, both sets of research suggest a clear need for systematically collected information on the coincidence of the two trends in a random sample of organizations.

***Sample.*** In June 1996, the ASTD Research Department administered a mail survey to a national sample of 1500 establishments in four industry groups: manufacturing; transportation, communications, and public utilities; finance, insurance, and real estate; and services. The

industry groups were chosen because the extent of downsizing and the nature of the work in these industries were expected to produce some interesting contrasts. This unique sample was drawn from two populations to increase the likelihood of achieving a nationally representative sample. Approximately 850 of the establishments were drawn at random from a list of ASTD members in these four industry groups. The remaining 650 establishments were drawn randomly from a list of 1,000 human resource managers in the four industry groups compiled by the Southeastern Institute for Research (SIR). The survey yielded 204 responses for an effective response rate of 15 percent after discounting ineligibles and inactive establishments. (Actual N's for the analyses vary depending on the number of cases with missing data.)

Although ASTD respondents were smaller than ASTD non-respondents, multivariate response bias analyses controlling for industry found no significant differences between the two groups. Likewise, no response bias according to size, industry, and age was detected in the SIR sample. On average, respondents from ASTD membership tended to be younger, smaller, and more likely to use innovative human resource and training practices, but were otherwise similar to SIR respondents.

***Instrument.*** The survey instrument consisted of a five-page questionnaire with four major sections. Section I contained questions requesting basic background information on the organization, such as its age and total payroll. Section II collected information on the use of human resource management and training practices in 1995 and 1992. Section III asked questions regarding the number of employees at the organization, the number of jobs created or eliminated, and the job elimination strategies employed since 1992. Finally, Section IV requested information about the organization's performance in 1995 and 1992 on a number of different measures.

***Key Variables.*** High performance work systems: Although there is considerable overlap across studies, no single, accepted measure of a high performance work system exists. Factor and cluster analyses are commonly used to group organizations with coherent sets of work practices together in search of the group with the highest level of performance. For example, Arthur (1994) employed ten practices and arrived at six clusters of organizations, while Ichniowski (1990) produced nine groups from six practices.

Factor analyses of 15 human resource and work practices identified from the high performance work systems literature produced three coherent factors. The first consisted of four alternative compensation practices: profit-sharing, employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs), team-based compensation, and incentive compensation (alpha = .60). The second factor was comprised of work practices commonly associated with the quality movement: job rotation, quality circles, self-managed teams, total quality management programs, access to business information, and employee involvement (alpha = .81). The final and weakest factor grouped together several alternative reward mechanisms: gainsharing, skill- or knowledge-based pay, and employment security policies (alpha = .40).

Three scales were created out of these factors by averaging the percent of employees covered by the practices in each factor. Scores on the three factors were then averaged to produce a single composite measure of high performance work systems. The items in this measure and manner in which it was constructed bear much resemblance to Lawler, Mohrman, & Ledford's (1995) measure of employee involvement.

Downsizing: Measures of downsizing vary widely across research on the topic, two of which we chose to examine. The first, following the practice of Cameron and his colleagues, measured the percent change in total employment at the establishment from 1994 to 1995. We also asked respondents to report both the number of jobs eliminated and created at the establishment over the same period. Job elimination as an indicator of downsizing has been used by several studies, including the AMA annual surveys (AMA Research, 1995). However, as the AMA data reveals, because job elimination is often compensated for by job creation, this measure is less indicative of actual workforce reductions or layoffs.

Performance: Data were collected on a number of objective and subjective measures of organizational performance. Due to extremely high levels of missing data, the objective self-reports could not be used. Respondents were much more willing to provide subjective assessments of performance. They were asked to indicate the extent to which the performance of

their establishments versus their goals had changed between 1994 and 1995 using a 5-point scale on five measures: quality of products and services, quality of work life, employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and overall performance. A factor analysis of the five measures produced a single composite measure of organizational performance (alpha = .79). Scores on the five measures were averaged to produce a scale of organizational performance.

**Results**

***Descriptive Analyses.*** We begin by examining the incidence of high performance work practices and downsizing practices in our sample. Respondents reported the percentage of non-managerial employees covered by each high performance work practice in 1995. The practices of gainsharing (13%), team compensation (16%), and knowledge/skill-based pay (17%) were used by the fewest organizations, while job rotation (64%) and quality circles (60%) were the most popular. Self-managed teams, one of the practices most commonly associated with high performance work systems, were employed by 37 percent of the organizations. The incidence of high performance work practices in our sample compare favorably with estimates obtained in other studies ("Industry Report 1996," 1996; Lawler et al., 1995). The average percentage of employees covered by each practice among those using the practice ranged from 36 percent for self-managed teams to 87 percent for profit-sharing. Organizations in the transportation, communications, and public utilities industry led the other industry groups both in terms of incidence and coverage.

Downsizing, as measured by change in employment, occurred in about 35 percent of the establishments between 1994 and 1995. This figure is somewhat higher than estimates over roughly the same period produced by the AMA (27%) (AMA Research, 1995) and *Training* magazine's survey (31%) ("Industry Report 1995," 1995). However, when we look at the amount of downsizing in the same four industries in these latter two studies, the numbers appear to fall somewhere between 31 and 35 percent. The picture is actually rosier than it is bleak: on average, establishments increased in employment by 7.8 percent.

Our results also show that employment decreases and job elimination are not synonymous. Nearly 60.5 percent of respondents indicated that they had eliminated jobs over the same period. Only half of those establishments also reported an employment decrease. When job creation is included, only 36 percent of establishments had a *net* decrease in the number of jobs. On average, establishments in the sample eliminated 42 more jobs than they created.

Establishments that eliminated jobs were also asked about the methods and actions they employed to achieve their eliminations and the types of assistance provided to displaced employees. The most popular downsizing practice was eliminating jobs through attrition used by 71 percent of these companies, while eliminating entire levels of management was used by only 13 percent. Among downsizing actions, 64 percent communicated the causes of the job eliminations to employees, but only 15 percent involved employees in those decisions or tried other cost cutting measures first. Extended pay/benefits was the most common form of assistance (64%), while a disappointing 23 percent provided retraining to displaced employees.

***Downsizing and HPWS Correlates.*** Relatively few characteristics of organizations in our sample were significantly correlated with either HPWS or downsizing. HPWS for instance was negatively associated with two factors: organization size and being located in the service sector. Downsizing meanwhile was positively associated with larger organization size, a common finding in previous research on the topic (AMA Research, 1995; Van Buren, 1994), and the percent of employees covered by collective bargaining contracts (discussed below).

Organization size is obviously an important factor; although larger organizations are more likely to downsize, they are less likely to implement extensive high performance work systems. The relationship between HPWS and size is somewhat unexpected since most examples in the popular literature are drawn from large organizations. Implementing HPWS, however, is a radical departure from the traditional, bureaucratic design of most large organizations. It is certainly plausible that smaller organizations can more easily undertake this transformation. In addition,

they may be able to include more employees in the high performance practices since jobs tend to be less narrowly specified.

The negative relationship between HPWS and service sector is to be expected for several reasons. Service organizations tend to be smaller on average, many of the principles behind HPWS were first implemented in the manufacturing sector, and high performance practices appear to be more difficult to apply to knowledge work (Gephart & Van Buren, 1996).

Bivariate analyses also show that organizations which have more extensive high performance work systems are less likely to report employment decreases. Non-downsizers had a significantly higher mean score on the HPWS scale and used more work practices that covered 50 percent or more of their employees (3.8 versus 2.7). In particular, organizations which offered incentive compensation to their non-managerial employees and provided access to pertinent business information were less likely to downsize.

Logistic regressions of the likelihood that organizations downsized between 1994 and 1995 confirmed this relationship. Controlling for organization size, the high performance work systems scale had a negative effect on the likelihood of downsizing. (Supplemental regressions showed no influence of HPWS on the magnitude of the employment change.) The zero-order effect of unionization, however, was non-significant. The fact that larger organizations were more likely to be unionized suggests that the relationship of unionization with downsizing is probably mediated by size.

Apparently, HPWS lessens the need for companies to reduce the size of their workforce. One possible interpretation of this finding is to view downsizing as a proxy for poor performance. After all, downsizers in the sample exhibited significantly less improvement in overall performance versus goals, particularly in the quality of products and services. The effect of HPWS on downsizing may be the result of improved organizational performance in companies which make heavy investments in eliciting employee commitment. Companies with committed employees improve or maintain their performance and thus have less need to reduce their workforces.

A more precise way to examine this interpretation is to look at the direct effect of HPWS on organizational performance. The performance scale discussed above was regressed on organization size, the HPWS scale, and a dummy variable for whether the organization had downsized, controlling for whether the establishment was part of a multi-establishment firm. All three of the key independent variables had a significant influence on performance.

Organization size, as expected, had a positive direct effect on organizational performance. And, confirming the zero-order relationship above, companies that downsized had significantly poorer improvement in performance versus goals. More importantly, even after controlling for downsizing, the use of high performance work systems had a significant and positive effect on performance. This latter result suggests that the impact of high performance work systems on performance is both direct and indirect through downsizing.

In an effort to assess the systems perspective which underlies the notion of HPWS, we also regressed organizational performance on the individual human resource and work practices in the HPWS scale, using the above model. Consistent with the systems perspective, none of the practices by themselves had a significant effect on performance. Thus, we can conclude that it is the emergent effects of a coherent and complimentary set or bundle of high performance practices that enhance performance.

Our last research question concerned the compatibility of various downsizing practices with HPWS. To address this question, we confined our final set of analyses to companies that had downsized between 1994 and 1995. Using the model specified above, we regressed the performance scale and then the individual performance measures on organization size, multi-establishment status, the HPWS scale, and the individual downsizing practices.

Curiously, none of the downsizing practices were related to either the performance scale or the measure of improvement in overall performance. Instead, we found that individual downsizing practices influenced particular measures of performance. Although interpretations of each relationship are beyond the scope of this paper, it is noteworthy that organizations may achieve different results by using different combinations of downsizing practices (see Table 1).

Table 1

| | | Performance | Measures | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Downsizing Practices** | Quality of Products & Services | Quality of Work Life | Employee Satisfaction | Customer Satisfaction |
| Eliminated Levels of Management. | | **Negative** | | |
| Eliminated Functions/Depts. | | **Negative** | | |
| Early Retirement | | | **Negative** | |
| Identified High Potential Employees | | | **Positive** | |
| Conducted systematic task analyses | | | | **Negative** |
| Communicated causes of Eliminations | **Positive** | | | |

Next, we assessed the compatibility of each of these practices with HPWS by creating interaction terms between the significant practices and the HPWS scale. The results of these analyses, however, were disappointing as none of the interaction effects were significant. Correlations between these particular downsizing practices and the HPWS scale revealed that high performance organizations were no more likely to use them than other organizations. Further analyses are needed to test the possibility that, in keeping with their systems orientation, high performance organizations use more effective combinations or sets of downsizing practices.

## Conclusion

Like most organizational research, HRD research suffers from a lack of solid evidence tying *systems* of human resource practices to performance beyond the individual level. The importance of a systems perspective is evident from previous Strategic HRM research showing that human resource and work practices are more effective when used in bundles rather than in isolation.

Our study confirms that high performance work systems are associated with improved organizational performance across a national sample of organizations. We extend this conclusion by illustrating that the performance-enhancing effects of high performance work systems occur regardless of the performance-reducing effects of downsizing, an action which often results in lower employee commitment, motivation and trust. In addition, we find that certain downsizing practices affect performance, as measured by employee and customer satisfaction and quality of work life, more adversely than other practices.

As the roles of HRD practitioners become increasingly proactive and they experience mounting pressures to demonstrate the contribution of various HRD initiatives, our study provides reasons for HRD practitioners to be optimistic that their efforts can enhance organizational performance despite the presence of forces which require that their organizations downsize. The significance of systems of human resource practices, provides another impetus for the shift towards diagnosing larger performance problems and creating performance-enhancing solutions.

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# Performance Diagnosis Matrix: A Discussion of Human Resource Development Scholarship

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*The field of Human Resource Development (HRD) draws from many disciplines and is working to continually develop a strong theoretical base. This discussion offers a stronger understanding of the elements necessary to improve organizational performance by researching seminal authors and research studies for concepts raised in Swanson's (1994) Performance Diagnosis Matrix. These fifteen questions address performance variables (mission/goal, systems design, capacity, motivation, and expertise) at three performance levels (organizational, process, and individual).*

Even a brief review of the literature in the field of Human Resource Development (HRD) reveals that scholars believe that the field is in need of more scientific research and theory building (Arnold, 1996; Sleezer, 1996; Watkins, 1990). In his book Analysis for Improving Performance: Tools for Diagnosing Organizations and Documenting Workplace Expertise, Swanson (1994) presented a matrix of questions which enables a HRD professional to conduct a performance diagnosis towards the goal of improving organization performance. His matrix of three levels of performance (organization, process, and individual levels) and five performance variables (mission/goal, systems design, capacity, motivation, and expertise) creates fifteen questions that the HRD analyst can use with organizational leaders to optimize performance. Regardless of one's choice to employ Swanson's (1994) framework, these 15 questions raise *concepts* that are essential to any HRD professional's work and research.

Figure 1. Performance Diagnosis Matrix of Enabling Questions

| Performance Variables | Performance Levels | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Organizational Level** | **Process Level** | **Individual Level** |
| **Mission/Goal** | Does the organizational mission/goal fit the reality of the economic, political, and cultural forces? | Do the process goals enable the organization to meet the organizational and individual mission/goals? | Are the professional and personal mission/goals of individual's congruent with the organization? |
| **Systems Design** | Does the organizational system provide structure and policies supporting desired performance? | Are processes designed in such a way as to work as a system? | Does the individual design support performance? |
| **Capacity** | Does the organization have the leadership, capital, and infrastructure to achieve its mission/goals? | Does the process have the capacity to perform (quantity, quality, and timeliness)? | Does the individual have the mental, physical, and emotional capacity to perform? |
| **Motivation** | Do the policies, culture, and reward systems support the desired performance? | Does the process provide the information and human factors required to maintain it? | Does the individual want to perform no matter what? |
| **Expertise** | Does the organization establish and maintain selection and training policies and resources? | Does the process of developing expertise meet the changing demands of changing processes? | Does the individual have the knowledge, skills, and experience to perform? |

The concepts undergirding each of the enabling questions posed in the Performance Diagnosis Matrix originate from diverse fields. It is in these fields, too, that solutions to many HRD challenges are to be found. Passmore (1997) discussed that, because HRD is a field of practice and not a discipline itself, it is critically important that the research conducted in the field

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has "broadly understood and accepted theoretical and empirical underpinnings" (p. 3) from various disciplines.

**Purpose, Process, and Format**

This article researches the theoretical underpinnings of the concepts that underlie HRD issues, using the enabling questions proposed in Swanson's (1994) Matrix as an organizing framework. For each cell of the Matrix, two types of scholarship were identified:

1. Foundational: One piece, considered to be foundational to the understanding of the underlying discipline posed in that cell, was identified. These books or articles were chosen based on the criteria that the author(s) had made a significant scholarly contribution to their field.
2. Research: A quantitative or qualitative research study that develops new knowledge about *one aspect* of each cell's question was selected. A research study supplements intellectual thoughts found in foundational pieces and ensures (a) the development of new knowledge in the field and (b) more grounded theories for application.

It is noted that the scholarship chosen to address the performance variables and levels is only representative of *some* of the thinking that can be found in the multiple fields. This study is not meant to be an exhaustive review of the scholarship in each field. In addition, due to the contributions of diverse scholars to the multiple elements reviewed here, it should be noted that the placement of certain authors can be considered arbitrary.

This article briefly discusses the scholarship chosen for each variable at the three levels. The authors and research studies that are examined are presented in Figure 2, with the first name in each box representing the author(s) of the foundational piece and the second name representing the author(s) of the chosen research study.

Figure 2. Authors of Selected Foundational and Research Publications

| Performance Variables | Performance Levels | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Organizational Level** | **Process Level** | **Individual Level** |
| **Mission/Goal** | Porter (1987)<br>Miller & Cardinal (1994) | Juran (1988)<br>Cleveland, Schroeder & Anderson (1989) | Locke & Latham (1990)<br>Terpstra & Rozell (1994) |
| **Systems Design** | Nadler, Gerstein, Shaw & Associates (1992)<br>Amburgey & Dacin (1994) | Churchman, Ackoff & Arnoff (1968)<br>Buzacott (1996) | Hackman & Oldham (1980)<br>Campion & Thayer (1985) |
| **Capacity** | Penrose (1995)<br>Govindarajan (1988) | Hayes & Wheelwright (1979)<br>Kim, Ritzman, Benton & Snyder (1992) | Dunnette & Fleishman (1982)<br>Englebrecht & Fischer (1995) |
| **Motivation** | Kleinbeck, Quast, Thierry, & Häcker (1990)<br>Petty, Beadles, Lowery, Chapman & Connel (1995) | Davenport (1993)<br>Maull, Weaver, Childe, Smart, and Bennet (1995) | Shamir (1991)<br>Petty, McGee, & Cavendar (1984) |
| **Expertise** | Campbell, Campbell & Associates (1988)<br>Lyau & Pucel (1995) | Jacobs & Jones (1995)<br>Jacobs (1994) | Goldstein (1993)<br>Papa & Graham (1991) |

**Mission/Goal Variable**

***Organizational Level / Foundational*** Michael Porter (1987) has written some of the most compelling and definitive works regarding competitive strategy in the face of environmental challenges. In his book, Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors, Porter (1987) defined corporate strategy and changed the face of strategic planning in his prescription of six elements that must be included in a strategic plan.

***Organizational Level / Research*** In "Strategic Planning and Firm Performance: A Synthesis of More than Two Decades of Research" by Miller and Cardinal (1994), the authors, using a meta-analysis of 26 previously published studies, found that strategic planning positively influences firm performance. In addition, they contested that methodological differences across studies were primarily responsible for the inconsistencies reported in past literature.

***Process Level / Foundational*** Process goals linked to strategy and the individual was the underlying foundation of the quality approach presented in Juran on Planning for Quality. Juran (1988) suggested that the organization translate a clear set of strategic goals into tangible product goals that can then serve as the basis for the design of a dependable process that performs.

***Process Level / Research*** Cleveland, Schroeder & Anderson's (1989) "A Theory of Production Competence" argued that production competence is a variable attribute that can be measured and that process capability positively contributes to business performance. Using an extensive diagnostic procedure of six companies, this study validated that production competence is indeed the link between production process and business strategy and goals.

***Individual Level / Foundational*** Much of the current research on goal setting focuses on the individual in isolation, rather than on the need of aligning individual goals with those of the organization. Locke and Latham's (1990) work, A Theory of Goal Setting and Task Performance, proposed a coherent, data-based theory of goal setting that focuses on motivation and satisfaction as two measures contributing to our understanding of goal congruence.

***Individual Level / Research*** "The Relationship of Goal Setting to Organizational Profitability," by Terpstra and Rozell (1994), investigated the relationship between profitability and organizations which implemented goal setting programs. Their research found that organizations which used goal setting or its applications to increase employee performance experienced significantly greater profits and profit growth.

**Systems Design Variable**

***Organizational Level / Foundational*** Organizational Architecture: Designs for Changing Organizations, by Nadler, Gerstein, Shaw and Associates (1992), focuses on the fit between an organization and its environment in addition to the congruence of its design elements. Thus, "the formal structure, the design of work practices, the nature of the informal organization or operating style, and the processes for selection, socialization, and development of people" (Nadler et al., 1992, p. 4) are included in the concept of organizational architecture. Their model clearly addressed the relationship between the structure of an organization and its desired performance.

***Organizational Level / Research*** Amburgey and Dacin (1994) examined the strategy-structure relationship in "As the Left Foot Follows the Right? The Dynamics of Strategic and Structural Change." The authors' research found that changes in strategy are more likely to effect changes in structure quicker and with more magnitude than changes in structure effect strategy. This study underscores strategy's key role in setting the direction for performance and the importance of organizational structure and systems in supporting that strategy.

***Process Level / Foundational*** Introduction to Operations Research, by Churchman, Ackoff & Arnoff (1968), represents one of the first comprehensive and scholarly attempts to describe the methods, concepts, and techniques of operations research, a field whose goal is to optimize multiple classes of processes in an organization. The approach offered a firm grasp of the common problems that arise out of multiple processes and provided an applied resource that details methodologies to address these problems and work towards an aligned, well-functioning system.

***Process Level / Research*** Buzacott (1996), in "Commonalties in Reengineered Business Processes: Models and Issues," mathematically models nine assertions of superiority of a system using reengineered systems to assess their validity. Although he acknowledged that the models do not fully capture all the factors that determine system behavior, his detailed analyses showed that the reengineering principles, while not always valid in all situations, added great value in considering the appropriate way to structure processing systems.

***Individual Level / Foundational*** Hackman and Oldham (1980), in Work Redesign, argued that a major influence on productivity is the relationship between employees and their jobs. The authors addressed how organizations can be designed, staffed, and managed such that employees are more fully utilized and satisfied, with neither the needs of the organization nor of the individual taking a dominant role. They argued that the more powerful tool is to redesign jobs to improve the *fit* between individual employees and their jobs.

***Individual Level / Research*** In "Development of an Interdisciplinary Measure of Job Design", Campion and Thayer (1985) delineated different approaches to job design and their respective outcomes. Their Multimethod Job Design Questionnaire, a job design taxonomy and corresponding job outcome taxonomy, was created, tested and found to be reliable. The authors established that no *single* job design approach can fully explain all outcomes or show the HRD professional how to maximize individual design to support performance.

**Capacity Variable**

***Organizational Level / Foundational*** A Theory of Growth in the Firm, by Penrose (1995), identified a general theory of growth in firms in response to the question of whether "there was something inherent in the very nature of any firm that both promoted its growth and necessarily limited its rate of growth" (p. xi). She presents an extensive, economically-based model dealing with questions of capacity, with capacity being interpreted as an organization's need to build and sustain leadership, capital, and infrastructure to achieve its goals.

***Organizational Level / Research*** Govindarajan's (1988) study, "A Contingency Approach to Strategy Implementation at the Business-Unit Level: Integrating Administrative Mechanisms with Strategy," explores the alignment of strategy with administrative mechanisms. The results of the study provided empirical evidence that organizations must adopt a flexible approach to managing their business, tailoring their leadership, capital, and infrastructure to the needs of the individual business units, and ensuring optimization of the organization's parts.

***Process Level / Foundational*** The Hays and Wheelwright (1979a) Matrix, in "Linking Manufacturing Process and Product Life Cycles," formalized the product/process relationship and highlighted the necessity of linking manufacturing with organizational goals to optimize the processes' capacity to perform. The foundation of the matrix is a set of statements about the conditions under which one particular configuration of manufacturing strategy is preferable.

***Process Level / Research*** "Linking Product Planning and Process Design Decisions," by Kim, Ritzman, Benton, and Snyder (1992), employed mathematical programming to test several linkages between product planning and process design—two areas critical to a manufacturing process's capacity to perform. By modeling the impact of a system linking the product planning and process design versus one that does not, this research confirms that the success of a particular product or service design resides in the management of the total design process.

***Individual Level / Foundational*** Human capability assessment is reviewed in Human Performance and Productivity, edited by Dunnette and Fleishman (1982). The focus is on assessment as the primary means of matching job requirements and individual resources. The volume offers a breadth and depth of knowledge about the characteristics of individuals that are indicative of a person's capacity to perform.

***Individual Level / Research*** "The Managerial Performance Implications of a Developmental Assessment Center Process," by Englebrecht and Fischer (1995), found that developmental assessment had a positive impact on managerial performance and was still measurable after three months. This study shows that assessment centers are effective in assessing an individual's capacity, and that this assessment positively influences performance.

**Motivation Variable**

***Organizational Level / Foundational*** Work Motivation, edited by Kleinbeck, Quast, Thierry, and Häcker (1990), "illustrates how theoretical concepts in organizational psychology are related to the

solution of practical problems of work performance in organizations" (p. ix). This foundational synthesis examined issues of work motivation at two levels: 1) the fundamental motivational structures of achievement behavior and 2) the applications of research advances on motivation in the design of programs and systems to improve performance and organizational effectiveness.

***Organizational Level / Research*** Petty, Beadles, Lowery, Chapman, and Connel (1995), in their article "Relationships Between Organizational Culture and Organizational Performance," found that organizational culture measures were significantly related to measures of performance.

***Process Level / Foundational*** In "Process Innovation: Reengineering Work Through Information Technology," Davenport (1993) introduced his framework for process innovation. This work identifies change levers (technology, information, and human/organizational factors) as key enablers that influence, and are influenced by, the strategy and the process.

***Process Level / Research*** In "Current Issues in Business Process Reengineering" (BPR), Maull, Weaver, Childe, Smart, and Bennet (1995) investigated components necessary for BPR success. From the data, six issues emerged that each company had to address at some point in the life cycle of the BPR project. The study empirically underscores the importance of information and human factors in a process intervention.

***Individual Level / Foundational*** "Meaning, Self, and Motivation in Organizations" by Shamir (1991) reviewed current work motivation theories, discussing their shortcomings. He argues for a model of work motivation based on the relationship between self-concept and behavior. This theoretical contribution provided more solid understanding about what truly compels an individual's motivation to invest efforts in their work-role and job.

***Individual Level / Research*** Petty, McGee and Cavendar (1984), in "A Meta-Analysis of the Relationships Between Individual Job Satisfaction and Individual Performance," examined the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. Results showed that correlations between the variables were higher and more consistent than previous research had indicated and demonstrated a positive correlation between individual job satisfaction and job performance.

**Expertise Variable**

***Organizational Level / Foundational*** Productivity in Organizations, by Campbell and Campbell (1988), focused on translating organizational goals to specifications for individual performance, which is directly linked to the need for an organization to establish and maintain policies and resources for selection and training. Two chapters are particularly relevant. First is a chapter advocating human resource allocation systems that establish selection systems to improve the match between worker characteristics and job requirements. Second is a chapter that developed a seminal training design model stemming from the question of what an individual must learn to be productive—that is, what kind of specific expertise must be learned to fulfill organizational goals.

***Organizational Level / Research*** Lyau's and Pucel's (1995) article, "Economic Return on Training Investment at the Organizational Level," examined labor productivity returns from investments in training in manufacturing firms. Using multiple regression analysis that controlled for 14 other variables that might affect labor productivity, the researchers' results demonstrated a significant relationship between investments in training and labor productivity.

***Process Level / Foundational*** Jacobs and Jones (1995) argued in Structured On-the-Job Training (OJT) that current economic demands have made employee expertise "a strategic necessity" (p. x) for organizational survival and that training processes must address the need of changing expertise requirements. The authors presented OJT as the most effective and efficient means through which employees' training needs can be addressed and thoroughly detailed specific processes for the design, delivery, and evaluation of OJT.

***Process Level / Research*** A case study of a large truck assembly plant, "Unstructured versus Structured On-the-Job Training" by Jacobs (1994), addressed the issues of training efficiency and product quality and the comparison of the financial cost and benefits of unstructured versus structured OJT. This study found that structured OJT produced greater training efficiency and product quality and more has serious potential to more effectively meet the demands of changing processes.

***Individual Level / Foundational*** Training In Organizations, by Goldstein (1993), provides a model of the training process within an organizational culture. He noted not only the need to identify training requirements, but the need to discern the organization and its climate, understand the trainee and his/her characteristics, and to build rapport with key organizational members. He also asserted that both the type of learning involved and the instructional event being considered must be clearly understood in order to choose learning procedures that ensure individuals have the knowledge, skills, and experience to perform.

***Individual Level / Research*** "The Impact of Diagnosing Skill Deficiencies and Assessment-Based Communication Training on Managerial Performance," by Papa and Graham (1991), evaluated an organizational diagnosis program that assessed managerial communication skills followed by a needs-based communication training program. They found that managers who received the training had higher performance ratings over three long-term assessments than the managers who did not receive the training. This study confirms that individuals who have adequate knowledge, skills, and experience *do* perform more effectively.

**Conclusion & Discussion**

Swanson's (1994) Performance Diagnosis Matrix provides a diagnostic tool that can be used to conduct an organizational assessment towards the goal of improving organizational performance. It also provides an effective framework in which to research the theoretical underpinnings of elements posed in the enabling questions. These elements are useful theoretical knowledge, regardless of one's choice to employ Swanson's (1994) framework. For each of the cells, two pieces of scholarship were identified: (1) a foundational piece representing seminal thinking about elements of the enabling question and (2) a study that provides sound scientific research *about one aspect* in the enabling question.

In working with this model, empirical support for the enabling questions was found, but it should be noted that the nature of the research did not necessarily constitute a "perfect fit." Swanson's Matrix (1994) presents quite a few issues distinct from past scholarly work that should be pursued more specifically in future research.

In addition, our extensive research found little scholarly work about the process level of performance. Although there are many popular references regarding the topic, the following three issues are notable:

1. There is a lack of grounded research about process and its role in performance;
2. There is a lack of a cohesive concept that articulates the meaning of a process and its implications;
3. Much of the current popular literature discussing process is often, in actuality, information about reengineering, which is distinct from other process interventions.

It is suggested that future research focus on the process level of performance as an integral component of sustained organizational performance.

The purpose of this article is to explore the theoretical underpinnings of elements raised in Swanson's (1994) Matrix, rather than to support or critique it. However, it should be noted that a few of the questions posed by Swanson (1994) presented difficulty not only in researching, but also in conceptualizing about the meaning of the question. For instance, the question, "Does the organizational system provide the structure and policies supporting desired performance?," concerns systems design at the organizational level. Since policies are addressed as a component of the motivation performance variable at the organizational level (see Figure 1), there seems little need for policies to be addressed as a part of this question. In addition, the foundational piece and research uncovered during this study supports the focus of this cell remaining on structure.

It is helpful, too, if the HRD analyst approaches Swanson's (1994) Matrix with the ability to shift from past paradigms that may limit their understanding of the broader meaning undergirding the enabling question. For instance, the question at the systems design performance variable/individual level, "Does individual design support performance?," really asks the analyst to consider job design. "Job design" is a well-researched concept, whereas the concept of "individual design" may seem unfamiliar. The difference in understanding this enabling question could be a

simple language disconnect. This difference points to a larger issue that HRD is currently facing: that is, the absence of an agreed-upon language for future research and application. Agreed upon language and conceptual understandings will ensure that future scholarship builds on past research and knowledge. This is integral to the maturation of HRD and its future effectiveness in contributing to the improvement of organizational performance.

Finally, a note about the *methodology* used to complete this study. The process of researching the theoretical underpinnings of a model, *any model*, is powerful. It is these researchers' hope that the power of the methodology will stand a part from one's choice to employ Swanson's (1994) framework. The implications and benefits of this methodology include:

- Through the acceptance that HRD is, by nature, an interdisciplinary field, HRD scholars and professionals can increasingly draw upon already existing research in these diverse disciplines. We can learn how to better access, understand, and apply this valuable research and knowledge to the field's challenges.
- Through the *first-hand* experience of knowledge and research in these respective disciplines, HRD scholars and professionals can increase their ability to develop their current thinking into new, and possibly, even more sophisticated theory.
- Through the identification of quantitative and qualitative research, models and organizing frameworks can be empirically supported. A common belief in the field is that HRD professionals and scholars intuitively know that the field's models and strategies are effective. However, there is little research stemming from the use of sound methods that validates much of HRD's contributions. The examination and use of grounded research will increase the credibility of the field and ensure a better dialogue between research and practice, a primary goal of HRD.

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# An Exploratory Study of Significant Relationships and the Work Performance Styles of Peak Performers, Workaholics, and Average Performers

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*While many factors that affect work performance styles (Peak Performer, Average Performer and Workaholic) have been identified by a large number of researchers, my research found the influence of relationships on work performance styles to be virtually unexplored and significant. I conducted in-depth interview with thirty subjects, identified by peers and/or supervisors as exhibiting proposed characteristics of one of these work performance styles. Two inventories were administered to provide supplementary information. The conclusions are striking.*

The concept of peak performance has generated widespread interest since Garfield (1986)popularized the term in his book Peak Performers. While the human potential movement has focused on self-development strategies for some time, it is only recently that the business world has taken the idea and developed it as a strategy for increasing productivity in the work place. Through my counseling, teaching and management consulting practice, I have had long-term interest in and experience with individual growth and development.

My interest in peak performance was stimulated by success in facilitating clients and managers to modify their behavior to achieve peak performance in all aspects of their lives. In questioning what contributes to peak performance, it became clear that the importance of relationships had been overlooked in the academic and popular literature. Although some of the literature had indirectly suggested that relationships were influential, nothing in the research clearly linked relationships with peak performance. Thus, the research idea was born to explore these relationships of peak performers.

Kriegel and Kriegel (1984) have done extensive research in comparing peak performance to other work styles. These work styles are also referred to as performance styles in this paper. Kriegel and Kriegel (1984) outlined three performance styles or zones which were depicted as points on a continuum. Type C is peak performance and falls at the mid-point on the continuum. Type A, or workaholic style, and Type B, or average style, fall at opposite ends of the continuum. Type C style, or peak performance, is depicted as a balanced work performance style. This work style represents quality, without the harried, stressed negative side effects of workaholism.

Other researchers have examined the comparison between peak performance and workaholism (Garfield, 1986; Korn & Pratt, 1986). However, Kriegel and Kriegel's (1984) research was the only study that included average performance and presented the three styles in continuum format. Kriegel and Kriegel's findings paralleled my own experience with the exception of how relationships affect performance style.

From my professional experience, I theorized that all three performance styles were possibly influenced by their significant relationships. Underpinning each of the three performance styles were unique interpersonal characteristics which contributed to their manifestation. Thus, it was determined that further study was needed to explore this correlation between relationships and work performance styles.

## Problem

The major research question of this study was two-fold: (a) how do intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships affect performance styles and (b) can the individuals within each of these performance styles create and tailor relationships to support and/or change their behavior?

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Peak performance has been explored in the existing literature from the vantage point of the individual's relationship with himself. Physical and behavioral strategies for improving performance have been proposed, including therapeutic approaches to improve self-esteem. However, no attempt has been made to establish a connection between peak performance and the individual's relationships with significant others. In looking at human performance, the individual is not isolated but is affected by the environment, including interpersonal relationships. Therefore, a study of how significant relationships influence work performance could make a significant contribution to the literature.

**Purpose**

The specific purpose of this study was to explore the following question: How do peak performers differ from average performers and workaholics in terms of their intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships? In examining existing theory on performance styles, it was determined that for purposes of this research, the following four types of relationships were most relevant to the study: (a) early influential relationships (parents, relatives, teachers, coaches); (b) work relationships; (c)spiritual relationships; and (d) the relationship with self.

An understanding of the concept of peak performance requires an expanded focus to include an examination of the reciprocal effects of significant relationships. Previous research has focused on mission, production, and team effort at best--but not on the reciprocal aspect of relationships. This research is directed toward exploration of the power of relationships in influencing work performance styles.

**Methodology**

No research has examined the relationships of peak performers and the linkage of those relationships to performance style. Therefore, the goal of this study was to begin to develop a theory that addresses the connection of significant interpersonal relationships and work performance styles.

***Rationale for the Methodology*** For the purposes of this study, the interview approach was the most appropriate data gathering technique. Garfield justified the value of the informal interview as the most appropriate technique for eliciting information about a peak performer's work and accomplishments:

Formal question-and-answer interviews too often lead to conditioned cliches, particularly when the topics are such loaded ones as personal success and performance on the job.

The developmental nature of this type of research made it difficult to generate conclusions which were definitive statements. They were more accurately viewed as points of departure in understanding the dynamics of personal growth and development.

This research identified commonalities and differences among three sets of subjects consisting of peak performers, average performers, and workaholics. Specifically, this study focused on their relationships and how those relationships influenced their work performance style.

***Selection of the Participants*** For purposes of this study, educators were chosen as subjects. Suburban educators from one geographical section of a metropolitan area were selected based on geographic proximity. As a former educator, my professional expertise and familiarity with the field was an advantage in analyzing the interview data.

There was no attempt to gain a random sample of educators for this study, since the primary criteria for selection was that the educators were reputed by their peers and/or supervisors to be peak performers, workaholics, and average performers and that they matched the characteristics for one of the three performance styles.

In order to obtain a sample of educators representing each of the three work performance styles (peak performers, workaholics, and average performers), educators, consisting of teachers of the year winners and/or administrative staff were contacted and showed a hypothetical list of characteristics of the three performance styles. Based on the recommendations of these people, letters were sent out requesting participation in the study. From responses, 10 peak performers, 10 workaholics, and 10 average performers were solicited.

The majority of the educators contacted replied that they would be willing to participate in the study. It was noteworthy, however, that the cooperation of the workaholics had to be solicited more persistently that the two other groups. Overall, the workaholics were harder to contact and schedule an interview with due to their busy schedules. At one point there was some concern about being able to get 10 workaholics to participate in the study because of the difficulty of scheduling.

## Design Overview

The design called for an in-depth structured interview plus the administration of two inventories. The structured interview was considered the heart of the research, with the major focus of time and analysis concentrated on the interview process and data gathered. The inventories were considered supplementary or backup information either supporting or not supporting the interview data.

***The Structured Interview*** An in-depth interview was conducted on the 30 subjects. The interview was scheduled, for the most part, at the educators' places of work, although a few were in the homes of the educators or at the researcher's office. The interview lasted approximately one hour and consisted of six in-depth questions which explored four general areas: early relationships, work relationships, spiritual relationships, and relationship with the self. The questions were asked in a consistent sequence and were open-ended in nature.

***The Inventories*** Each of the 30 interviewees were given two inventories to complete and return to the researcher. The two inventories were the Coping Resources Inventory for Stress, CRIS, (Curlette, Aycock, Matheny, Pugh, & Taylor, 1988) and the Interpersonal Behavior Survey, IBS (Mauger & Adkinson, 1980). These inventories were chosen to look more closely at the behavioral processes pertaining to relationship issues.

The IBS has a relationship scale which measures three areas: shyness, dependency, and conflict avoidance. These were seen as relevant and complementary to the issues explored in the interviews. The CRIS examines coping measures for dealing with stress. Kriegel and Kriegel's (1984) research established an association between peak performers and their ability to deal with stress; therefore, it was determined that the CRIS would be an effective instrument to check for this possible association.

## Conclusions

The conclusions of this research suggest that within each work-performance style there were similarities in background that probably were reflected in their work-performance styles. For purposes of this research, a conclusion was not stated within a particular work performance style unless the interview data showed concurrence for the majority of the individuals interviewed within that sample (6 or more).

***Similarities Among Average Performers*** The backgrounds of the average performers were similar in a number of ways that may have influenced their average performance style. The average performers' families tended to be over-protective, encouraging them to be good kids and giving them the message that average was acceptable. They were not encouraged to take risks and/or make waves, but rather to be "good" within the context of few or no extremes, and to do what was right and expected, as projected by traditional values. This pattern of relating was revealed in the interviews as well as the inventories.

The average performers' work performance style revolved around avoidance and protection. They avoided conflict so that they did not have to deal with what made them uncomfortable. This behavioral strategy also protected their shyness and their fragile self-esteem.

Very early in their lives, the average performers began to move toward protecting their comfort and security, and moving away from what they did not like risk and challenges. They continued to exhibit this pattern in their adult relationships. Their significant others supported their performance style, as did their families while they were growing up. This was also reflected in their work environments.

***Similarities Among Workaholics*** The backgrounds of the workaholics were similar in a number of ways that may have influenced their workaholic performance style. The research showed that workaholics also repeatedly avoided conflict. As the average performers protected their shyness, the workaholics were invested in maintaining their detachment. The interviews revealed that the workaholics mirrored an early family environment in which detachment had been modeled for them.

As children and youth, the workaholics made mature decisions without input from others who were sensitive to their needs. The workaholics' families did not seem available on an emotional level and did not elicit deep provocative thinking, expressing, or relating. The workaholics' current relationships likewise reflected this detached style of relating. As was the case with the average performers, the workaholics carried their superficial, harried, task-oriented relationship style over into their work performance style.

It was evident that the workaholics lacked spontaneity and avoided conflict in relationships. In terms of their work performance, the workaholics reported that they typically kept long hours and stayed busy with things and activities and did not spend a great deal of time with individuals in a personal way. In terms of their work, their detachment served them in that they were able to work to the point of burn-out, partly because their insensitivity to early stress signals propelled them to keep working, when it might be more viable to break the pace and rest.

This finding was in keeping with Korn and Pratt's (1986) contention that "new achievers" (peak performers) are able to deal with stress in a productive way, whereas "workaholics are characterized by stress and are prime candidates for depression and illnesses." Kriegel and Kriegel (1984) likewise use this analogy in describing the Type C profile as "peak performance under pressure without the debilitating effects of stress that rob us of our health and enjoyment of life" (p. xvi).

Workaholics, like average performers, protected their comfort zone in their work, but their comfort zone was staying busy. This work style originated from a desire to avoid the conflict of being, exploring, and deep introspection which they were very uncomfortable with. This was evidenced in their detachment.

Since many of the workaholics came from families that had absence or loss, this family situation may have contributed to their feeling handicapped in close communication and intimacy issues. Some of the workaholics referred to the fact that their families did not have a tendency to talk openly or do creative problem solving together. The workaholics implied that they received a subtle message that their parents did not want to be bothered with them.

The research also showed that the workaholics exhibited a high degree of denial regarding their workaholism. Schaef and Fassel (1988) described workaholism as an addiction to work which is subtly reinforced within organizations.

***Similarities Among Peak Performers*** The backgrounds of the peak performers were similar in a number of ways that probably were reflected in their peak performance style. The results of this research indicated that the peak performers' early lives were filled with a broad set of experiences. They were encouraged to read, explore, express, wonder, think, and relate. The peak performers' families were characterized by a combination of firm limit setting and support. This finding was in concurrence with a study that linked high-achieving females with families who provided "strong emotional support for their achievement" (Williams & McCullers, 1983).

It was considered highly significant that the combination of discipline and support may have laid the foundation for the peak performance style that evolved with these individuals.

Where the family environment did not fit the model of providing loving support for natural exploration and expression, peak performers were able to bond to significant others outside the family who enabled them to express themselves and responded to their needs.

The peak performers were distinctive in life style and work style in that they exhibited a stress-reducing coping mechanism called reframing. Reframing is the ability to shift one's perspective from a possible negative situation to a possible positive one. This technique enabled them to tailor their feelings and actions if desired. It also enabled the peak performers to view life in terms of options, rather than from a helpless, limited choice perspective.

One of the most obvious and outstanding characteristics of the peak performers was their open, transparent authenticity. This may be attributed to the fact that they have been their real selves for so long, as their early environment encouraged and supported it.

There was evidence that the peak performers had a high level of self-confidence, which was in contrast to that of the workaholics or the average performers.

The peak performers' work performance style was in accordance with the literature on successful executives and organizations. Like the peak performers' home environment, Thompson (1983) stated that the most successful companies had "tough, but supportive environments." Furthermore, Glasgow (1980) profiled high-achieving managers as having relationships of trust, equality, and openness. This participative management approach among successful executives also concurred with Kriegel and Kriegel's (1984) description of the peak-performing Type C who demonstrated three consistent characteristics: commitment, confidence, and control. The peak performers in this study had relationships which matched those of the successful executives.

In summary, as in the other two groups, there was a dramatic similarity in the way the peak performers were related to growing up, how they currently relate, and how they perform, as peak performers.

***Differences Among the Three Groups*** In comparing the average performers, workaholics, and average performers on the basis of their early relationships, it was noted that their interpersonal styles were not only influenced by their early family relationships, but also impacted the way they relate to others and their work performance style.

In this study the average performers and the workaholics did not experience relationships of acceptance and support in their families. This influenced them to adapt an interpersonal style that was shy and reserved. Furthermore, conflict in relationships was avoided to protect their shyness and inhibition. The peak performers, on the other hand, experienced early relationships that contributed to their fully expressing themselves. This style of relating in their early family environment was modeled in their open, expressive work performance style. Thus, the average performers, the workaholics, and the peak performers have tailored their adult lives to match the relationship patterns and the communication patterns of their early upbringing.

**Implications for Human Resource Development**

Training programs for managers and other employees, based on this research, could be helpful in increasing productivity as well as improving employee morale and satisfaction with their work. The approach should be two-fold: It should include programs that teach and coach individuals who want to change themselves and programs that encourage the organization to be supportive and to train supervisors how to coach employees who want to modify their behavior toward peak performance.

Managers in organizations need to become more aware of how relationships impact work performance rather than focusing exclusively on the quantity and quality of task-oriented behavior as it impacts productivity. A recent study (Kosodimos, 1989) suggested that this narrow focus within organizations leads to an organizational climate which promotes and encourages employees to be workaholics rather than peak performers. Imbalance in their lives is often costly for Workaholics and organizations as well. It may take a major crisis such as a heart attack or a marriage breakup to shock employees into facing the imbalance in their lives.

Managers must take a more active role in supporting and facilitating their employees to enrich their intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships and develop improvement strategies for average performers and workaholics that are tailored to their individual performance styles.

Management development programs could be offered to increase awareness of the different performance styles and how relationships can be influential. For example, trainers who teach management development seminars could focus on increasing managers' awareness of the different styles and how to approach them. In addition to awareness, strategies for change can be taught to both managers who act as coaches and individual employees who desire to move toward peak performance.

In order for organizations to encourage peak performance, they need to be more flexible and encourage individuals to lead balanced lives. This could be accomplished, for example, by providing more enrichment opportunities to employees. Such opportunities encourage employees to move toward peak performance, attract more peak performers to the organization, and help retain employees for longer periods of time.

To help organizations identify the three performance styles in prospective employees, and thus develop strategies for hiring and development, an inventory could be developed to assess a person's performance style. This inventory would also offer concrete recommendations for ways to tailor an individual's behavior from one performance style to another.

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# Integrating Communication in Organizations

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***Training and human resource development is one "voice" among many in organizations. It is critical to examine and coordinate formal training and development messages with the content and dissemination of other organizational messages such as employee communication, marketing, policies and procedures, and promotional communication to avoid information overload, communication gaps, and contradictory information.***

As organizations of all types deal with increasingly fast-changing and complex products and services, more regulatory requirements, and internal and external audiences that demand prompt and complete information, most have experienced an increase in the number of messages and message-senders. New communication technologies such as voicemail, e-mail, desktop publishing, and Intranets, as well as a relatively popular and unquestioned assumption that "more communication and more training is better" have encouraged organizations to spend even more time and money on communication — including training.

In most organizations, however, the various "voices" of the organizations exist as "islands of communication" (Gayeski, 1993) — even when all of them are supposed to represent the organization's official viewpoint, policy, or style. And, in most large organizations, these various "islands" such as training and development, information systems, policies and procedures, employee communication, marketing, advertising and PR, are not only separate departments but they rarely coordinate their activities. It is this *dis-integration* of communication that we have found is causing major performance and morale problems.

## Challenging Past Assumptions

Traditional models of communication practice (including public relations, instructional design, and employee communications) are based on a number of assumptions that are no longer valid (Gayeski & Woodward, 1996):

- Although they generally include audience and message analysis, traditional models of communication and instructional design practice assume that one type of well-designed intervention will solve the problem — be it training, promotion, or information-retrieval. They do not help practitioners determine what types of problems are potentially not solvable by these interventions, nor do they incorporate the other types of support that are generally necessary for any long-term change to occur. For example, employee communication and training systems may promote safe work practices, but if the work design and performance appraisal systems do not reinforce these messages, they are likely to be ineffective. The traditional linear models of communication analysis and message design reflect early linear models of communication: assume the "sender" crafts a well-designed message, the "receiver" will "get it". They do not reflect the complex interplay of interpretation and negotiation among all parties in a communicative situation, nor the impact of environmental and social influences.
- Conventional models assume that the client or requester has correctly identified the problem and the appropriate intervention — for example, that a performance gap is due to poor morale or that a two-day training course is needed. Traditional practice is reactive rather than proactive. Moreover, there is evidence that clients and sponsors often "do not ask us to deliver what they need; they ask us to deliver what they believe we can provide ... We do not do what we are not asked to do — improve human performance in the workplace" (Regalbuto, 1991, p.31).

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- Traditional communication practice measures the outcomes of communication projects by satisfaction indicators — how much the audience "liked" a meeting, newsletter, or course, or by readership or attendance statistics. These statements of satisfaction are assumed to relate to the effectiveness of an intervention in terms of organizational goals. Few models for evaluation actually link interventions to the "bottom line" (Kirkpatrick, 1994).
- Finally, the typical training and management of professionals in the various "islands" of communication does not encourage them to learn about each other or to cooperate. They each manage messages only within their own domain, and have little interaction with other "communicators". Furthermore, in the current environment of uncertainty and downsizing in many organizations, these individual departments are competing with each other for budgets, headcount, and credibility with management.

These assumptions are creating a number of problems that we have observed in organizations and are actually causing communication and training departments to contribute to *decreased* rather than *increased* performance.

**Snapshots of Dis-Integrated Communication**

The development of the concept of "dis-integrated" communication in organizations was prompted by several of the author's consulting engagements within a variety of different organizations. In each case, top management had identified that apparently well-designed training, management messages, or other types of formal communication were not achieving the desired results. In the ensuing analysis of each situation, one common factor emerged: a lack of awareness of and coordination with other organizational initiatives and messages. Some short "snapshots" of case studies illustrate this concept:

- The communications department of a healthcare organization sent out a letter over the CEO's name appealing to its employees for donations to its research fund; this letter arrived in employees' mailboxes on the same day that human resources sent out an announcement that their benefits package would be cut. The cynicism and ill will that was caused by this mis-timing not only caused the research fund drive to fail but it caused problems in getting employees to accept the new benefits package and painted a very poor picture of the CEO. More than a year later, this incident keeps being repeated as an example of how "unfeeling" and "out of touch" the organization is towards its employees — the very *opposite* of the values and desired message of the management leaders.

- One major Canadian bank found that quite literally if its branch managers read and responded to all the memos, held meetings to discuss new policies as directed, and engaged in training programs that were requested of them and their staffs, that in some months there would be *no hours left to do the work of the bank*. Branch managers also reported that performance of some tellers actually dropped after training; the apparent cause was their being overloaded with too much detail and too many facts which was causing them to "freeze up" on the job.

- An insurance company was challenged with having to continually increase the length of its training courses for new customer representatives to the point where trainees spent eight to twelve weeks in the classroom before they worked their first hour on the job. This caused major staffing problems since in effect, new customer representatives were only available about three times a year, after the training courses were completed. A major source of what was perceived to be "training problems" was that the public relations and recruiting "voices" of the organization were painting an inaccurate picture of the customer representative job position, and the wrong people were being attracted to the position. Furthermore, a lack of coordination between the policies manual used by the customer reps and the communication sent to providers' offices caused many difficult and seemingly unresolvable problems for

reps to handle. This caused dissatisfaction and stress, and increased turnover, further exacerbating the problem.

- In a large restaurant chain, we found that managers were being sent such a large volume of print, e-mail, voicemail, and other media that they could easily spend four hours a day doing nothing but processing this material. Because their jobs did not allow for such a time expenditure, they were ignoring at least half of it; the problem was that in this fast-growing company, inexperienced managers didn't know what half to ignore and were making costly mistakes. Because headquarters staff knew how hard it was to get managers' attention, they often sent voice mail to announce that an e-mail had been sent, only to follow that up with the same message in print and another voice-mail reminder. Naturally, this situation repeated hundreds of times over amounted to unacceptable information overload.

**The Role of Human Resources in Integrating Communication**

In most organizations, there is no single person or department charged with integrating, or harmonizing communication within the organization. What does this integration involve?

- developing a set of values, philosophies, and styles of communicating with internal and external audiences and ensuring that all formal communication that represents the "voice" of the organization adheres to them;
- coordinating the dissemination of messages and programs so that audiences have the time to process them and so that they don't overlap in awkward ways;
- developing consolidated information sources — instead of having dozens of newsletters, memos, and other communication, related information can be grouped together and distributed in a more holistic way, be it through a daily e-mail news update, a set of Intranet pages, or on a bulletin board;
- making sure that employees hear news and product information before their customers do and that they understand the marketing messages being sent to their customers;
- ensuring that all the "islands of communication" run from standard platforms and have a similar set of goals and objectives

There are a number of possible approaches to engineering the previous activities. The healthcare organization discussed above has recently combined the formerly separate departments of audio-visual, staff development, and human resources into a new "human and organizational development" department with an advisory team comprised of members from corporate communication and information systems. The corporate communication team has received a mandate from the corporation's leadership to adopt a formal system of integrating communication within the organization and they are now developing management tools to do so. The restaurant chain mentioned previously hired a new manager of corporate communication who has a strong training and new technology background. They re-framed the position description and this person is now charged with developing ways to streamline communication to the individual sites. The bank developed a "change management calendar" which allowed the policies and procedures department to document major planned announcements and training activities several months ahead of time and to coordinate their dissemination.

Entirely new job titles and descriptions are being crafted. For example, Millbrook Distribution Services has recently created a position of Chief Learning Officer with a small staff of communication, graphic arts, media production, and instructional design specialists. The Chief Learning Officer at Millbrook has stated, "Management of the formal communication processes of the organization as part of the Chief Learning Officer's responsibilities is believed to be a leading edge innovation... In times of non-stop change, it is essential to bridge the traditional 'islands of corporate communication' such as training and development, employee communications, public affairs, corporate media, documentation, library systems, policies and procedures, and advertising

and marketing to create integrated, consistent, and coherent messages to stakeholders". Coca-Cola has also created a similar position of "CLO" (Willis and May, 1996).

Since employee communication and training functions typically are situated within human resources departments, it seems reasonable to suggest that HR professionals take the lead in establishing a framework for integrated communication within their organizations. A simple picture of the typical state of "dis-integrated" communication is presented in Figure 1 below. Various message-sender departments produce and disseminate messages and other informational programs that are sent out to receivers. Since commonly there is more information disseminated than can be digested by receivers, each receiver sets up his or her own filter for what is attended to at all, and then what is believed and remembered.

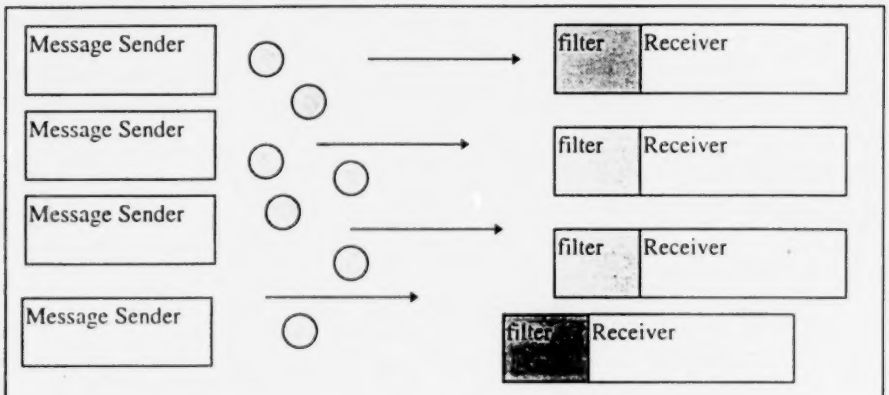


Figure 1 Dis-integrated communication

By contrast, an integrated communication system coordinates and harmonizes messages from various senders. This system, composed of various rules (policies, procedures, formats, etc.) and tools (distribution channels such as newsletters, company Intranets, planning documents and calendars) ensures that messages are coordinated in terms of facts, styles, and distribution timelines. Instead of each person trying to build his or her own "filter", the system pre-filters information and makes it available in the forms most useable by each receiver. (See figure 2).

It is important not to construe this function as a "gatekeeper" or inhibitor of a free flow of information throughout an organization. Additionally, this concept does not apply to informal interpersonal communication — its function in fact is to *enable* more spontaneous interpersonal communication by reducing the load and dissonance of uncoordinated *formal* and *mass distributed* messages.

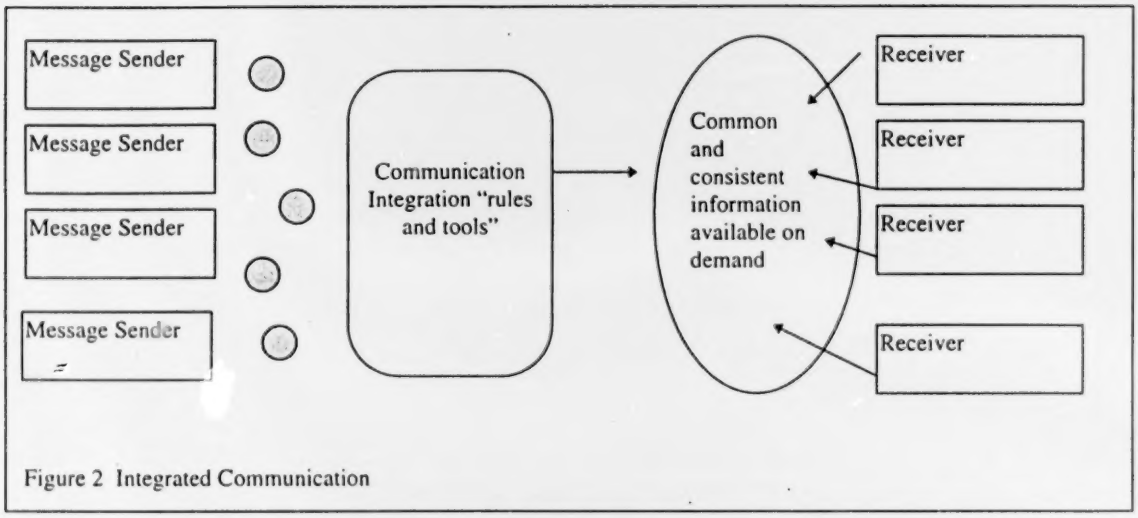


Figure 2 Integrated Communication

As human resources and training move towards a "performance consulting" (Robinson & Robinson, 1995) or "performance technology" (Stolovitch & Keeps, 1992) model and are pressed to be more accountable for showing measurable return on investment, the management of formal communication becomes a more important role to assume. If, as we have seen from our action research, many people in organizations are spending one-third to one-half of their time processing information (and still not keeping up), it is easy to recognize the enormous amount of corporate resources being spent on this activity. Additionally, it is not difficult to build a case for the importance of crucial information "getting through" to the right people in a streamlined manner. In several of the author's projects, management has quickly seen that even modest efforts in integrating communication could save several million dollars within a year, not to mention avoiding many potentially expensive and embarrassing mistakes due to communication inadequacies.

**How to Begin the Process**

Although of course there is no one best way to begin the process of integrating communication, in the author's experience each organization that has successfully addressed the problem in under two years has taken these steps:

- top management has identified a need to better manage communication and learning;
- at least one professional in the area of human resources, training, corporate media, or employee communication has stepped forward with an interest and at least some previous awareness or training in this area;
- a strategic planning team was convened that represented members of various departments that were communication-senders and typical audience members along with at least one outside resource or mentor;
- the strategic planning team had input and encouragement from outside colleagues;
- the strategic planning team piloted at least one model intervention within six months of their charge

A number of new technologies are spurring the initiation of integrated communication, particularly Intranet (internal Web) sites. When a whole set of organizational messages are consolidated in one place, it becomes easy to see where information conflicts and where users would naturally expect "links" among related topics, even if they come from different departments.

In some cases, integrated communication was initiated because although it was technically easy to "post" Web pages, no one in the organization could decide who was to "own" the Intranet site or who was authorized to add to and update it. Because of the current interest in new technologies, information systems departments are sometimes being looked to as potential managers of organizational communication. For example, the primary topic of discussion among managers at the recent national conference of the Communication Media Manager's Association in October 1996 was the relationship between communication professionals and information systems professionals. In some organizations, what had been the province of employee communicators, human resource policy professionals, and trainers is now being taken over by information systems departments.

The time is right for human resources professionals to take a leadership role in managing what may be the most important and most costly function within organizations — communication. By critically challenging old assumptions and facing the true costs of communication overload, human resources professionals have the potential to help their organizations become more humane and more effective places to work.

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